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Photo by Roberta John

Navajo Code Talkers at the Navajo Nation Fair parade

## **Navajo Nation Fair to Highlight Navajo Treasures**

By Roberta John

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – Navajo elders are priceless treasures.

And once in a grey moon, you may be fortunate to meet a Navajo hero who is nearly one century year-old.

The most prominent Navajo hero today is undoubtedly 90-year-old Navajo Code Talker Chester Nez from Jones Ranch, New Mexico. Nez is the only living member left of the original 29 U.S. Marine Corps 382<sup>nd</sup> Platoon who used the Navajo language to develop an unbreakable secret code in World War II to defeat the Japanese.

Nez will be the grand marshal for the 66<sup>th</sup> Annual Navajo Nation Fair parade, which will incorporate the theme “Appreciating Tradition.” The Navajo Nation Fair is the “Largest American Indian Fair” in North America. For the first time in the fair’s history, the public



submitted nominations for the parade grand marshal and a new category, celebrity grand marshal. The celebrity grand marshal will be Darlene Yazzie who is an on-air radio host for KTNN (a tribal radio station owned by the Navajo Nation).

It was a natural to select Nez as the grand marshal who was an unsung Navajo hero for many years while Yazzie is well-known throughout grassroot Navajos as a hallmark for helping to increase awareness about traditional Navajo culture. In prior years, Navajo Nation Fair staff and the parade committee made the selection.

Navajo Nation Fair Manager Norma Bowman, said, “We decided to let the public get involved in the parade grand marshal nomination - I think they made an excellent choice. We’re very happy and honored to have Mr. Chester Nez, the last living original Navajo Code Talker join us during the Navajo Nation Fair parade. This will be a rare opportunity for everyone to see and meet Mr. Nez.”

Bowman added, “There’s nothing more fitting than to have Mr. Nez as our grand marshal because we appreciate all of our veterans for their dedication and service so we can enjoy our freedom and have events such as the Navajo Nation Fair. This will be a great time to pay tribute to our Navajo elders and celebrate their accomplishments.”

The Navajo Code Talkers never fail to awe. Perhaps the 66<sup>th</sup> Annual Navajo Nation Fair may end up being the most memorable since Nez is the only original Navajo Code Talker still alive.

Bowman noted, “The overall population of the Navajo Nation is young so we are always very happy and honored to have elders participate in a host of events that we sponsor or who choose to just enjoy the Navajo Nation Fair. Our elders are precious and full of wisdom – they provide us a glimpse of the past and are the key to our future.”

Speaking of elders, most people who reach 50 may think of slowing down and reminisce about bygone days. But, that’s not the case if you’re a senior break away roper who will be participating in the Navajo Nation Fair Open Indian Rodeo, which will be held on Wednesday morning, September 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dean C. Jackson Rodeo Arena on the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds. Senior break away will be part of the Open Indian Rodeo slack competition, which is scheduled to begin at 8 a.m.



In fact, approximately 30 senior Native American break away ropers will rise to the occasion and compete in a one go-round event to earn a wild card qualification to the International Indian Rodeo Finals (IIRF) in Albuquerque in September. Many Navajo Nation Fair rodeo event winners are likely to vie for a world championship title just after the Navajo Nation Fair.

To add to the testament of classic nostalgia, 24 Native American teams consisting of three wild bronc riding individuals will display their horse riding magic as they try to race their wild horses to the finish line on September 7-9<sup>th</sup>. The wild horse event will be held in conjunction with an Open Indian Rodeo that will be held on September 7-9<sup>th</sup>. Rodeo fans will see a razor sharp showdown of champion Native American cowboys and chic cowgirls from throughout the U.S. and Canada who will compete for thousands of dollars in prize money. It is said that Indian rodeo is the most popular sport on the Navajo Nation...just come on out and you'll see why. In fact, it just doesn't get any more rustic and original than Indian rodeo here on the Navajo Nation...this is your chance to see relics of the old west come alive.

If riding rough stock is not exactly your rendition of expressing a few seconds of glory, a more refined event of running freestyle may be the solitude you're looking for. Runners can embrace and revel in the beauty of Navajo as they participate in a half marathon event during the Navajo Nation Fair. The half marathon will begin at the parade entry line-up in Tse Bonito at 7 a.m.

If you want to see a culmination of unique beauty and a celebrated example of traditional Navajo culture, be sure and bring your camera and photograph immaculately dressed Navajo elders and youth at the traditional Navajo song and dance competition. Here you will see Navajo people from throughout the reservation dance to traditional Navajo songs and the beat of a drum while wearing their finest minutely detailed traditional Navajo attire. This is your chance to capture picture-perfect Navajo elders dress to the nines.

The Navajo Nation Fair will also include a free Christian concert, a junior rodeo, a Miss Navajo Nation butchering contest, a frybread contest, a Nizhoni Arts Market, an Extreme Native Bull Riding event, Native American comedy entertainment, an exceptional rodeo, a Navajo Nation Energy Expo, Hoshkii Happy/Kids Day, a free barbecue, Pueblo Country Opener for



Country Music Artist Gary Allan, a hot air balloon event, a traditional Navajo song and dance, an inter-tribal pow wow, a parade, an inter-tribal night performance, a fundraising golf tournament, a livestock and horticulture exhibit, a carnival, and more.

For more information, you can contact the Navajo Nation Special Events Office at (928) 871-7941 or 6632. You can also obtain information on their website at:  
[www.navajonationfair.com](http://www.navajonationfair.com)

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